



ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF EXECUTIVE ASSISTANTS AND PLANTING
THE SEEDS FOR A SECURE FUTURE.

The Executive/Executive Assistant Business Partnership

In an economy that demands that we do more with less, corporate leaders are relying more on their executive assistants and positioning them as indispensable members of senior leadership teams around the world.

The tradition of executive support is being given close scrutiny for all it can mean to executives and their organizations. Those who occupy the role of the Executive Assistant have clearly transitioned into a new normal, demanding specialized skills, relevant experience, increased personal aptitude and a commitment to exacting professional standards. These talents ensure an even better business opportunity than before: Professional Executive Assistants are rewarded with a fulfilling career.

Changes in the role have shifted to meet current workplace challenges. While the position becomes more strategic in nature, tactical skills are now required if your goal is to reach the level of Executive/Executive Assistant Partnership.

Individuals who choose this profession will find that this new performance standard includes traditional skills, complemented by management, leadership and global business skills. This requires that Assistants fill the capability gap with different ways of thinking in conceptual, operational effectiveness and solution-based, intuitive skills. The old way of managing the role must be transformed by learning these new skills to respond to how things can be done better and faster; and Executive Assistants must insist on proper training for their growth and development.

The traditional rules of support require knowing what to do, and what not to do. This continues to be achieved through self-discipline, learning and sharing knowledge, communications protocol, making decisions and resolving conflicts, completion of projects and tasks, dealing with crises, and technological fluency (including expertise and proficiency with various devices for scheduling and communication: e.g., hand-held mobile tools, such as BlackBerry, iPhone, iPad, texting applications, and presentation packages). The professional Executive Assistant's most distinguishing characteristics are empathy and a positive attitude, with a proactive approach to staying competitive. *more... ▶*

Upcoming Programs in New York City:

April 2-4 and April 23-25, 2012

6-day Premier© Program for C-Suite and Senior Staff: Leadership, Management, Working Partnership Accountability

March 2012 (date to be announced)

The New Executive Assistant 1-day BootCamp©: Self-Development, Productivity and Efficiency.

THE DUNCAN GROUP INC.

The Duncan Group Inc. is a New York-based firm specializing in four practice areas: recruitment of senior-level executive assistants and chiefs-of-staff, organizational consulting, coaching and "executive level" training for professional assistants.

The Duncan Leadership Institute offers Business Education for the Executive Assistant. Our curriculum models executive education programs that concentrate on professional development needs of executives. For information on our curriculum, please visit www.duncangroupinc.com.

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To meet the changing requirements of this role, important criterion include the ability to bring global and business knowledge to these traditional skills. Executive Assistants are expected to focus on results, think like managers, maximize efficiency and apply excellent analytic skills and tenacity to reduce complexity to simplicity. The willingness to change, and an attitude that suggests that there are no boundaries to learning and applying new skills, is a key strength; thus, new thinking becomes a new commodity.

In addition to a reputation of good character, empathy and good humor, the following are some of the indispensable skills that need to be cultivated to tackle these new challenges:

Excellence of process; Innovation (with the ability to adapt to sudden changes); Creativity (to offset the challenges you will encounter while learning); Speed, efficiency of process (in order to analyze an enormous amount of data); Focus on the smallest detail to ensure accuracy; Connect process innovation to your role; Apply judgment and discretion.

These indispensable skills continue to be the currency of the professional Executive Assistant, and support a unique work model, designed to assist executives and companies to operate at higher administrative levels. Acquiring these abilities is a fundamental choice, and will mark a critical milestone in your career.



"I put some things on your desk for you to sign, misplace, then say you never saw."

The Payoff: The Executive Assistant is poised to be a remarkable contributor. To achieve job satisfaction requires a solid match of skills and personality to the culture and the business enterprise. How you spend your working hours, and with whom you work, make the difference, not only in terms of efficiency but for its effect on your sense of self, your purpose and your creativity. We are always crafting ourselves. The trouble is if the "fit" is not achieved, then what we do will not be up to our standards, and will not reflect the attention and care that we are poised to offer. We then experience self-disappointment, and sometimes even regret. The product of our work is a most meaningful expression of loving ourselves.

We feel good about ourselves when we see the positive results of our efforts. This requires consistent focus, action, constructive concentration and the ability to look at what is missing. Together, these elements reinforce the creative quality of our lives.

In having chosen this career path, do so with the full knowledge that with all its complexity and relentless demands, that sometimes you will realize its true reward. To help someone else to achieve success is its own reward.

This voyage of evolution and development, acquiring and applying new knowledge, may be challenging, but it is equally rewarding. Success depends largely on our readiness to accept change, the desire to learn and apply new skills, and the ability to stay the course. As Henry Ford once said, "Whether you believe you can, or whether you believe you cannot, you are absolutely right!"

When you stop and think about it, you will realize that the work of the Executive Assistant is probably some of the most varied and intellectually challenging work in the entire company. And much of what expert Assistants do parallels what a good executive does: you shape the broad picture into a set of action steps, and then you execute!

Purpose, precision, and predictability define the role of the Professional Executive Assistant. That's just the way it is!

RESOURCES:

A host of books are available on management and leadership. Here are some favorites:

Being Strategic, Erika Andersen (St. Martin's Press, 2009)

What Jackie Taught Us, Tina Santi Flaherty (Penguin Group, 2004)

The Little Book of Economics, Greg Ip (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2010)

The Age of Singularity is Near, When Humans Transcend Biology, Ray Kurzweil (Penguin Group, 2005)

The Power of Professionalism, Bill Wiersma (Ravel Media, LLC, 2010/2011)